

l; Karsten--467-470
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-1

"What makes the funeral customs of the Canelos Indians particularly interesting are the ceremonial games which take place the first night after death, during the vigil. Among these Indians custom prescribes that during the first night after the death of the head of the family or the housewife the surviving relatives must hold vigil, thereby entertaining themselves, among other things with a dice game. The object of the game is partly to distribute the property of the dead among the survivors, since otherwise it is taboo and cannot be touched by anybody, partly to protect them against the contagion of death, that is, the disease-and death-demon. This game derives its origin from the mountain culture in Ecuador and Peru, where it is still played in a somewhat different form by the Quichua-speaking Indians.

The game is at Canelos called Huairitu--a diminutive form of the Huayru of the mountain Indians--and the die consists of a piece of manioc, about 10 to 12 cm. in length, with four sides, each side about 3 or 4 cm. broad, both ends [468] flat, so that the die can stay upright. If the game is played in honour of a dead woman, the die is somewhat smaller than if the deceased was a man. Of the four sides one is provided with three small holes; this is called singu, after which the whole die takes its name. The opposite side is quite empty and is therefore called llambui (nil, zero). Of the two remaining sides one generally bears four holes (chuscu in Quichua) and the other 10 (chunca).

l: Karsten--467-470
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-2

Among the Indians of Sarayacu, one of the four sides is hollowed out, so that the whole piece is like a small canoe, both ends of which are flat. The opposite side, which forms the bottom of the canoe, is empty (llambui); of the two other sides one has 3 small holes (singu), the other again 10 (chunca).

Apart from this, the huairitu game is played in the same way at Canelos and Sarayacu. The following is the manner in which the game is played at Sarayacu with the canoe-formed die.

If the die, when it is thrown, remains upright, the player has won the stake and he has, besides, the right or obligation to 'punish' his opponent. If, on the other hand, the empty side, which represents the bottom of the canoe, remains upward (llambui), the player has lost his cast. If the open side of the canoe remains upward, this is also reckoned as nil, but it is not indicated by a special name. If either of the sides which are provided with 3 or 10 holes remains upward, the player receives 3 or 10 maize grains accordingly, and these he at once puts aside.

When the family-father or -mother dies, it is the obligation of the surviving relatives to spend the first night in watching 'in order to accompany the soul (aya) on its last wandering'. During the first night the soul stays in the house, in the vicinity of the dead body, but afterwards goes to the heavens, to the mountains or the forests. Since the deceased has in his life often travelled by canoe, he starts his last journey in a

l: Karsten--467-470
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-3

canoe. This is the reason why the Sarayacu Indians give the die this form.

Among these Indians, just as among the Quichas of the Sierra, men alone take part in the game, never women and children. Likewise, only the invited guests play, never the nearest relatives of the deceased. If someone of the latter plays huairitu, the deceased will drag him along with him to the other world, that is to say, he will soon die. Similarly, among the Canelos Indians it is regarded as a great offence against the departed parent should anyone fall asleep that night. The departed soul itself does not leave such an Indian in peace, but draws him by the feet[469] so that he may not sleep. If he really falls asleep, his sleep will be very restless. In the morning when he wakes he will feel tired and sick and shortly afterwards he will die.

As soon as the patient has expired, guests are invited from all houses in the neighbourhood in order that they may take part in the vigil and play huairitu. The guests arrive after sunset and are, as is the custom among these Indians, generously entertained with manioc-beer (asua). The dead man is dressed in his best clothes and placed on a bier at one of the walls of the house. All around food of every kind, manioc, plantain, fowl, eggs, chicha, and so forth, is laid in various gourds, all these dishes being intended for the defunct. The playing men are arranged in two rows, opposite each other, so that every player has an opponent. The player who succeeds in throwing the die upright wins a hen, a head of plantain, manioc, chicha, or some other thing. What

I: Karsten--467-470
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-4

is won is at once taken out from the remainder and kept for the winner until the morning. If someone throws singu, he receives as already mentioned, three maize grains, which are likewise kept till the morning, one who throws chunca receives ten, and so on.

The player who wins the stake is, moreover, entitled to punish his opponent, which he generally does by striking him on the back of the hand with his own hand, or giving him a fillip on the forehead.

Early in the morning the hens, won by the players in the course of the night's gambling, are slaughtered, boiled and eaten by all communally with manioc and plantain. Every player likewise counts the grains he has won, keeping a special account of how many times he has thrown singu and how many times chunca. These grains generally have no practical importance, they only indicate the relative favour bestowed upon them by the deceased.

To the Indian mind, the huairitu game is not a mere game of hazard. The departed soul is believed to hover about the dead body the whole night, itself personally interfering in it. The player only throws the die on the ground; it is the unseen hand of the deceased which turns it in this way or that, according as he wishes to favour the player or not.

Just as those, who win nothing, but repeatedly throw llambui, are regarded as more

l: Karsten--467-470
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-5

or less antipathetic to the deceased and are therefore punished, so, on the contrary, the one who wins most is regarded as his particular friend and favourite. He is in consequence particularly honoured by the relatives and in the morning leaves the house of death richly endowed with presents of manioc, plantain, eggs, chicha, etc. [470]

It is a bounden duty of the survivors to honour the deceased with an huairitu game. If there is no wake and the game is not played, the deceased will feel offended and it may happen that he takes revenge on his relatives by sending disease and death, failure of the crops and famine, or some other misfortune. On the other hand, he will reward those relatives who pay him due honour. Their domestic animals will increase in number and their fields will flourish; in their house food will never be lacking, there will be plenty of manioc, plantain, game etc. He will moreover arrange that those, who now render him this service of love, will themselves, when they die, have people to honour them in the same way."

1: Karsten--470-473
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-1

"The Canelos Indians know yet another dice game that is played after a death, but this has now fallen almost into desuetude. It is called singu or huairitu like the game just described, but the die used is of another kind. This die, which may perhaps more properly be called a playing-board, consists of an almost circular wooden disk, about 15 cm. in length and 2 to 3 cm. in breadth. The obverse is somewhat convex, so that the disk can easily be put in motion by turning it round. On the right side of the disk a small human figure is incised or annealed. This figure represents the soul of the deceased (aya) and is called huahua huairitu, 'the huairitu-babe'. On both sides of this figure three small holes are applied and furthermore one hole between its legs, in a fashion which appears more clearly from the drawing. (Fig. 13). Thus there are in all 7 holes on the disk.

The corpse is placed on a bier in the middle of the house. Upon its paunch a board or some similar flat and even object is laid and upon the latter a cloth is stretched tightly. Upon this board the singu-die is placed.

The players arrange themselves on both sides of the bier. As usual, all of them are guests invited to the feast, and all are men. Each player had brought with him a small gourd containing charcoal and some water, when he arrived at the house. [471] With this colouring matter the guests paint certain black ornamental markings on the face before they begin the game.

Round the bier and in front of each player the widow of the deceased has placed an equal number of gourds containing different kinds of food which belonged to the dead Indian when alive: manioc, plantain, earth-nuts, eggs, chicha, as well as living hens tied by the feet. The food and the hens are staked at the game. Everything is really intended for the deceased, but since a soul needs only a little food, the deceased distributes most of it among the players, according as they possess his affections.

Each of the players has an opponent who is seated opposite him on the other side of the bier. If a player is victorious in the game, it is his opponent's share in the food that he wins. If he loses, he loses his own share to his opponent, who besides is entitled to punish him.

In the game five grains are used which are thrown on the singu-board. The players throw the grains by turns: at first A of the one row, then his opponent A' of the other row; thereupon B of the first row, and B' of the other row, and so forth.

Of the five grains one is at once placed in the hole which is situated between the legs of the small figure. This grain indicates the departed Indian's own share in the dishes put out, and it should not therefore be touched or removed by the players. The four remaining grains are taken by the player whose turn it is to throw them, and he takes his stand at the head of the corpse. The board is usually placed so that the small figure is orientated in the same direction as the corpse, its head being turned towards the

corpse's head. The player now throws all of the four grains at once upon the board, the intention being that they should enter into some of the six empty holes. We may assume that one grain enters into one of the holes, whereas the others fall outside. In that case the player is entitled to repeat the throw with these three grains, and, if he prefers, may throw them from the foot-end of the corpse. We may assume that one more of the grains enters into a hole. Now the player seizes the board with outstretched fingers, in the manner shown in the drawing (fig. 14), and turns it cautiously round. This should be done so that the three grains which lie in the holes, that is, the one which had previously been laid between the legs of the figure and those now thrown in, do not fall out. The manoeuvre of turning the board is now repeated once more. The idea is to have it confirmed that the result of the cast was not accidental, but that the deceased is really willing to give up thus [472] much of his share to the player as is indicated by the cast. In other words, an opportunity is given him to confirm the result of the cast, and possibly to alter it. If two grains have fallen each into its hole, this means that the player has won 4--2, that is, a half of the quantity of food which his opponent has in front of him. If the latter has, for instance, two hens and four eggs, the winner receives one hen and two eggs; he also receives half of his quantity of chicha, and so forth.

If, after the two casts, only one grain has entered into a hole, the player is entitled

l: Karsten--470-473
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-4

only to a fourth of the quantity of food possessed by his opponent. Again, if all four grains have entered into holes and, by the controlling test, managed by turning the board round, none falls out, then the player has won his opponent's whole share, which is at once given over to him. At the same time, the latter is thereby out of the game, since he has nothing more to play with, and the winner has the further right to punish him by giving him a fillip on the forehead.

If, on the other hand, after two repeated casts no grain has entered into a hole, the player has lost his whole share in the food supply to his opponent, is punished by him, and passes out from the game.

If with his two casts a player has won nothing, this is called llambui (nothing, zero). If every grain enters into a hole, all the players call out: llámbui gānan, 'he has won everything!'. The game is continued until there is only one of the players left.

As I have mentioned, the players never intentionally touch that grain which has been placed between the legs of the figure, because it indicates the departed Indian's own share in the foods put out. It some-[473] times happens, however, that a player, when he throws the grains upon the board, accidentally hits the grain lying between the legs of the figure, so that it falls out from the hole. This is looked upon as very unfortunate, since in consequence of the awkward cast the deceased loses his share. The

1: Karsten--470-473
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-5

widow and the other relatives, who do not take part in the game but follow it with keen interest, then begin to weep and wail, exclaiming: 'He has taken his share!' It may also happen that at the controlling test, carried out by turning the board round, a player out of carelessness or mere wickedness turns it round so quickly, that not only his own grains, but also that of the deceased fall out of their holes.

I was also told that no one is allowed to fall asleep during the whole night. If someone seems inclined to do so, burning cotton is put close to his eyes to keep him awake.

The whole game is a tribute of honour paid to the departed parent. The latter is supposed to feel flattered by it and will reward his loving relatives for it. He himself takes part in the game, giving good luck to one, bad luck to another. His soul is present in the small board, and when the latter is turned round, at the test, the Indians imagine that thereby the soul is swinging round. When the grains are thrown over the corpse, this is believed to hasten the decay of the body, whereupon the soul, released from its material bonds, will set out upon its wanderings to heaven.

If, as the result of a cast, two of the grains happen to fall into holes situated opposite each other on both sides of the small figure, they form, together with the grain placed between the legs of the figure, a cross. This cast is regarded as a good omen: the soul of the defunct will now soon enter heaven.

Each player may in the morning take the food he has won during the night to his home

l: Karsten--470-473
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-6

and eat it alone. Or, if the winners prefer it thus, a common meal is prepared out of the whole quantity of food early in the morning, in which all, both guests and hosts, winners and non-winners, take part."

"The huairitu game, both the last-mentioned and the one previously described, is not generally played the whole night, because the food put out is distributed as a rule before the morning. The rest of the night is spent in playing another kind of game, with burning balls of cotton. Upon the board which was placed on the stomach of the dead Indian a small cotton ball is laid and set on fire. The playing men arrange [474] themselves on both sides of the corpse and blow the burning cotton hither and thither upon the board, keeping the small ball in constant motion. Each player who finds the ball in front of himself immediately blows it to the other side, from where another player blows it in another direction, and so forth. The aim of this game is to nullify all danger of contagion proceeding from the dead body, since it is feared that the disease-demon may carry off other persons among the relatives surviving. (1)

All the Indians have expressly declared to me that the game is by no means played merely for the sake of pleasure or as a pastime, but that it is an absolute duty towards

"1. It is worth mentioning that a similar ceremonial game also occurs among the Shimigay Indians of the middle Pastaza. The game is here called singu, but the die is conical in shape (see Karsten, Ceremonial Games of the South American Indians, p. 26)."

1; Karsten--473-474

116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935

(1928-29)

Jivaro-2

the deceased. Apart from the details of the game, this moreover appears from the fact, that an omittance to perform this duty--that is, to wake and to play the dice game --is supposed to entail very grave consequences. The Canelos Indians did not even like to show how the huairitu game was played, but only explained it verbally. If the die is cast without necessity, my informant said, someone in the house might die."

"Those of the Canelos Indians who are related to the Indians of the Napo practise certain other kinds of game which are played at vigils. These games, however, are not dice games, but entertainments of another kind. Although these games are more in vogue among the Napo Indians than among the Indians of Canelos, I shall relate them here.

Four games of this kind came under my observation.

1. The game of blindman's-buff. One of the Indians is blindfolded and represents the dead person. His task is to catch some one of the rest of the party. These run around him, touch him with their hands and play all sorts of trick on him, in order to attract his attention, trying at the same time to avoid him. If the player blindfolded succeeds in catching one of the other men, this one must in his turn take the part of the blindman until he has caught someone else, and so forth, as long as the Indians like to play the game.

2. Playing with burning cotton. The playing men sit down on the ground in a circle round a big cloth or mantle, which is held by all so that it is tightly stretched and somewhat raised above the level of the [475] ground. One or two small cotton balls are set on fire and thrown on the cloth; the burning ball is then blown hither and thither on the cloth by the men holding it. The Indian who finds the burning ball in front of him blows it quickly towards another Indian sitting opposite him, the latter in his turn tries to rid

1; Karsten--474-476
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-2

himself of it by blowing it away, and so forth. By keeping the ball in constant motion it is possible to continue the game with the burning cotton for several seconds, without the cloth being burnt. One ball having been consumed by fire, another is kindled and thrown on the cloth, or perhaps two at once, the game being continued until the players get tired of it. --As it will have appeared, the game is about the same as the one already described as taking place in connection with the dice games.

3. The game with the concealed pin. The body of the dead Indian, dressed in his finest clothes, lies on the bier at one side of the room. The game itself consists in a pin or needle being concealed somewhere in the clothes of the defunct, sometimes even in his body, for instance in his feet. One of the playing Indians kneels down in front of the bier on which the corpse is placed and another, standing behind him, holds his hands to the searcher's eyes so that he cannot see. It is now the task of the Indian to find the pin concealed, feeling with his hands all over the clothes of the defunct. As soon as he has found the pin, he must alone empty a gourd of brandy. Thereupon he in his turn conceals the pin in the dress of the defunct, allowing another Indian, who has to kneel down in the same way in front of the corpse, to look for it. As soon as this one has found the pin, he drinks brandy in the same way and conceals the pin for somebody else.

4. Sirasu catuaini huasháma is the name given by the Napo Indians to a fourth game

which, as we shall find, is played in much the same way in Europe. The playing men are arranged in a row, one behind the other. An Indian, who represents the dead man, places himself in front of the first man in the row and says in a low voice: sirasu catuaini huasháma, or, generally, only: sirasu catuaini, which means: 'give me the last man from behind', or: 'give me the last one'. The man who said this now tries to catch the Indian standing last in the row, who, for his part, tries to escape him, running either to the right or to the left. His task is to reach the spot in front of the first man before he is caught by the 'Dead Man'. If he succeeds in doing so, the Dead Man must repeat the same with the following Indian from the end, who is now the last one. Again, if the last man (sirasu) is caught before he has succeeded in taking the [476] first place in the row, he must in his turn play the Dead Man, the former Dead Man taking his station as the last one in the row.

The games described above are continued during the whole night and nobody is allowed to fall asleep. Early in the morning, when the game is finished, a curious ceremony takes place. All of the men, who were engaged in the game, start to run about in the room on all fours, barking like dogs and attempting to imitate their movements; they kill all hens which belonged to the deceased, wringing their neck at the spot on which they catch them. A meal is subsequently prepared of the hens killed, in which all, both guests and hosts, men and women, take part.

1; Karsten--474-476
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-4

The Indians declare that this meal is a gift of the deceased by which he rewards those of his relatives and friends who have honoured him by the wake and by the food offered to him and have accompanied him on his last journey. "

1: Karsten--476-478
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-1

"The ceremonial game after a death among the Napo and Canelos Indians is called aya pugllana, which means 'to play the Dead Man'. This is in accordance with the idea appearing in most of these games, that the departed Indian himself actively takes part in them. Thus, for instance, in the first game it is the dead Indian himself, or more properly speaking, the disease-and death-spirit who is looking for fresh victims among the survivors, who acts the part of the blindman. Similarly, in the fourth game the Indian, who calls out sirasu catuaini and tries to catch the last man in the row, represents the disease-demon. The Indians have the idea that by representing dramatically the way in which the demon catches the survivors they are able to prevent them from being carried off in reality-- a principle underlying numerous games, dances, and other ceremonies of the South American Indians. Thus, for instance, the mask-dances are wholly founded on this idea. The game with the burning cotton is a purification ceremony. The Indians ascribe magic virtues to the cotton itself, and the burning cotton is believed to destroy the disease-contagion (usually personified into a demon) and to protect the survivors against infection. The same idea is equally manifest in the game with the concealed pin. Pointed instruments, like pins and needles, are often used as amulets against evil spirits. The pin is concealed in the very source of the disease, the corpse itself. When the Indians look for it and find it they are, as it were, rendered immune against the disease. The brandy which the Indians have to drink afterwards is

1: Karsten--476-478

116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935

(1928-29)

Jivaro-2

one prophylactic more against the feared spirit. The Indians are quite conscious [477] of the meaning of these ceremonies when they say that they play in the way described 'in order not to die away'.

It seems, at the outset, somewhat more difficult to explain the other custom, above described, when the men, imitating dogs, run about on all fours and kill the hens. The Indians have not described it to me in further detail, but I may point out some ideas which most probably underly it. First, it is clear that the men who act in this way are supposed to represent the dead Indian himself. The departed Indian himself must catch and kill the hens which he wants to give to those honouring him, and the Indians seem to fancy that on that occasion he takes the shape of a dog. On this point it may be appropriate to mention an idea prevailing among the Jibaro Indians, according to which, if a departed parent is not duly honoured with offerings of food, he will take revenge, among other ways, by reappearing in the shape of a dog that bites the hens in the house to death. That the souls of the departed may transmigrate into dogs is a common Indian belief which is shared by the Napo and the Canelos Indians also. Consequently, if, as may sometimes happen, the starving dogs bite the hens to death and eat them, the Indians ascribe this to the soul of a departed relative that has taken the shape of a dog. It seems to me most probable that the strange funeral custom just described must be explained in this way.

l: Karsten--476-478
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-3

Examining more closely the customs described above, we find that all of them are founded on a few definite religious ideas. On the one hand the survivors wish to honour the defunct by the games, inasmuch as they accompany him on his last journey and allow himself to dispose of the most valuable property he left behind, his domestic animals, usually in the expectation, directly expressed, that in return he may reward the survivors by virtue of the supernatural power he possesses. On the other hand, the games have for their object to protect the surviving relatives against the disease-and death-demon, who has carried off one member of the family and is believed to look for more victims among the living. This is an idea which must be explained more closely. In order to understand the funeral customs of primitive peoples it is necessary to distinguish, at any rate theoretically, between two classes of spirits to which the ceremonies have reference: the soul of the defunct, and the evil demon who caused the death of the relative and is regarded as a source of danger to the survivors also. It is a well-known fact that according to the belief of the Indians death-bringing disease depends on an evil spirit who penetrated into the body of the patient. If the demon succeeds [478] in completing his work of destruction in the body, the patient dies. But the disease-demon, having obtained possession of a person and caused his death, will at the same time lay hold of his soul also and change him altogether into an evil demon, whatever may have been his character in life; so that in many cases there is

l; Karsten--476-478
116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935
(1928-29)

Jivaro-4

practically no difference between the death-bringing demon and the spirit of the dead. This idea explains a fact which has often been commented upon by students of primitive religion but has never been satisfactorily explained: why persons, who in their lifetime have, perhaps, been honoured and loved are nevertheless after death feared as evil demons who are trying to inflict all sorts of evils upon the surviving relatives. This is due to the supposed fact that the defunct, that is, his soul, has fallen victim to a strange death-bringing demon who is trying to change the soul itself into a demon. The more spiritual power a person possessed in life, the more he is generally feared after death, because the strange demon lays hold of this power. This is the reason why old people and sorcerers are as a rule most feared after death as evil revengeful beings. It is only when we know this idea that we can satisfactorily explain a number of funeral customs and rites of the Indians which seemingly contradict one another. (1)

Although the Indians believe that the disease-and death-demon is trying to identify itself with the soul of the dead person, they still make a distinction between the two

"1. On the point, see more fully my Civilization of the South American Indians, pp. 477 sqq."

1: Karsten--476-478

116, 764, 524

(1916-18) 1935

(1928-29)

Jivaro-9

spirits which clearly appears in many of their funeral rites and ceremonies. Thus, of the mourning customs described above, some particularly have reference to the soul of the dead, others again to the death-bringing demon. For instance, when food is placed in front of the corpse and when the dice game is played, the Indians are only thinking of the deceased relative who was loved in life and to whom after his death the due cult is paid. Again, when pepper or tobacco-water is squirted into the eyes of the surviving relatives, when the game of blindman's-buff is played, when the mourners play with pins concealed, with burning cotton balls, or pieces of wood, these rites most clearly have only reference to the evil disease-and death-demon who still is believed to haunt the house and threaten the lives of the survivors. [sic] Their object is to protect the latter against this dangerous spirit, or, as we should say, against the contagion of death, with which the soul of the defunct has involuntarily been associated."

"Children do not have many formal games which they play but, like children in all parts of the world, they contrive to occupy themselves. There are usually mud banks to slide down and a fine playground in the jungles adjoining the chacras. Most of the games played by the girls consist in playing at making pottery, cooking, or working in the chacras. By playing at these tasks, they learn the duties which they must later perform, and at a very tender age they begin to be of real assistance to their mothers."

28: Tessenman--356 [3]

(No date) 1930

Jivaro

U6, 524

They have no tops, no whizzing disks, no ball games. Rope games are called uámbiy. As a doll they use an oblong calabash. They do not have any wooden or clay-made dolls in human shape.